



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL RETARDATION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

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April 19, 2004

For Immediate Release

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U.S. Department of Justice Closes Investigation of Western State Hospital

Richmond: Commissioner James S. Reinhard, M.D., announced today that he has received written notification from the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) closing the 5-year investigation of Western State Hospital (WSH) in Staunton. "Closure of the investigation at Western State Hospital marks the end of a 13 year process of federal investigations focusing on the quality of care in 5 of the 15 state mental health and mental retardation facilities. We have made significant improvements. Today we can be proud of our facilities and of the men and women who provide services to patients and residents. Getting to this point has taken a tremendous amount of dedication, attention to detail and commitment to high quality clinical care. I commend the leadership of Dr. Barber and all of the dedicated state employees who have made this achievement possible," said Dr. Reinhard.

Governor Mark Warner also praised the leadership and staff of the hospital, saying, "Dr. Barber and his staff are to be commended for improving the quality of care and bringing the services into compliance with DOJ requirements. Ending this investigation has required a great deal of hard work and cooperation. We are proud of this milestone, and recognize that we must maintain this focus on providing quality care in our state facilities."

Western State Hospital is a 281 bed state-operated psychiatric hospital. Following the DOJ investigation in late 1998, state officials negotiated a plan of continuous improvement. The plan addressed medical and psychiatric care, discharge planning and community placement, seclusion and restraint, medical care and medication practices, staffing and staff training, performance improvement and quality assurance. The DOJ conducted its final tour of the facility in April, 2002. Shanetta Y. Cutlar, Chief, Special Litigation Section, DOJ, wrote in the August 8 letter to the Governor, "It is evident that the Commonwealth and WSH officials have worked diligently to implement the remedial measures of the Plan. The Commonwealth, and particularly WSH staff and officials, are to be commended for their dedication, hard work and cooperation."

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